DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THERESIS PROCESS IN PRACTICE BASED ART EDUCATION IN REGARDS TO STUDENT TENDENCIES

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ABSTRACT
This paper is going to deal with thesis writing process and styles, in regards to student tendencies in graduate level art education.

There are two levels in graduate level art education in academic manner in Turkey. One of them is Master of Arts or Master of Fine Arts level after undergraduate education and Proficiency in Art education after M.A or M.F.A process. In this paper I will focus on M.A or M.F.A level thesis writing process through my experience as an academic and former art student.

The main reasons behind questioning thesis writing process and thesis styles is the different attitudes across departments of the same faculty and divergences between art faculties. The other reason is the tendencies of students as a very important determining factor in thesis writing. The outcomes will be gathered through my experiences and examination of written theses in various Fine Arts Faculties. The paper will also include thesis advisor’s observations, problems that they face with and solutions they invent.

Keywords: Master of Arts, Thesis, Art Work Report, Fine Arts Education, Student Tendency

INTRODUCTION
Before beginning, there are some points that needs to be clarified. The first point is the definition. Different names are given to the written outcomes of master level studies, such as thesis, art work report, master level art work report or art work text. During this paper, written outcomes of master level students will be referred as ‘thesis’.

Private universities are excluded from this study, the study will be based on the state universities’ policies on master thesis in Fine Arts Faculties. The reason behind this choice is that private universities usually prefer to have art and design or visual communication faculties in their structure, on the other hand, state universities have fine arts faculties.

Lastly, within the scope of this study, only some fine art faculties are examined and fine arts education departments are excluded from the context. The reason behind this selection is that education departments or faculties have a certain format about thesis process and style. Thus, the focus is going to be on the fine arts faculties and especially on their painting and sculpture departments.

Theses Titles of Universities

According to my researches and observations, I have seen that fine arts faculties does not have certain title and style about master level thesis format. The table below will manifest the situation. The results shown on the table is based on a survey across 6 state universities’ web sites. Since some universities’ web sites do not have English version or there is a web site with a very weak English, it is hard to detect how these universities call their Master Level practice based art education programs and how do they refer to their thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Name</th>
<th>Institution Name</th>
<th>Program Name</th>
<th>Written Outcome Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anadolu University</td>
<td>Graduate School of Fine Arts</td>
<td>Master of Arts (MA)</td>
<td>Master Thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University</td>
<td>Institute of Fine Arts</td>
<td>Master Level</td>
<td>Master Level Art Work Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marmara University</td>
<td>Institute of Fine Arts</td>
<td>Master Level</td>
<td>Master Level Thesis- Art Work Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yildiz Technical University</td>
<td>Art and Design Faculty</td>
<td>Master of Art and Design</td>
<td>Master Thesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table shows an interesting result: written outcomes of master level art students are titled with several names such as text, thesis, art work report, and project. The given titles are indicating the confusion. This is an important data because the issue of title is not something about just naming. This confusion continues also in working progress and style. Yet there is one certain thing: every university has its own thesis writing guidelines. But these guides usually explain which font should be used, what the paper format is, how the referencing system is etc. Context of the thesis is still stays vague. This vague context problem is the first problem.

Comparison of Theses According to Contexts

In this section of the study 5 theses were examined considering their contexts. All the theses were gathered from Council of Higher Education Thesis Center. Departments were considered in the theses selection and painting and sculpture departments’ theses were chosen. After examination of the theses a chart is prepared.

The first selected thesis was written by Gülten Eren Duran at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in 2015 in the Department of Sculpture. As it is seen from the abstract below the thesis starts with literature search, and continues with the explanation of important concepts such as persona, anima, animus. Then the writer refers to historical documentation and comes to 20th Century women sculpture artists. Last chapter covers writer Gülten Eren Duran’s art works. In this chapter she starts with a general explanation about her works and after that explains selected works from a formalist perspective and justifies the use of forms, symbols and her emotional condition without being too emotional. At the end of the thesis there is a short conclusion part, in which she summarizes the thesis. The first chapter, which is about wild women archetypes during history and examples covers the pages between 4-34 and second chapter on fairytales, instincts and sculpture covers the pages between 39-73 and last chapter on Gülten Eren Duran’s sculptures covers the pages between 77-85. (Duran, 2015).
The second thesis is Ozan Uygan’s master thesis about ‘The Use of 3D Printing Technologies in the Art of Sculpture’ written in 2016, at Anadolu University under the Department of Sculpture like Gülen Eren Duran. The following structure is observed in this thesis: In the first chapter he writes the relation between production techniques and sculpture and its effect on design and making process of sculpture between the pages 3-18, in the second chapter he writes about the 3D Printing Technologies between the pages 19-36 and in the third chapter he refers to artists who uses 3D Printing Technologies from current art scene. The thesis ends with a short conclusion (Uygan, 2016). Unlike Gülen Eren Duran’s last chapter, Ozan Uygan’s master thesis does not refer to his artistic production. This is the main difference between two theses.

The third thesis was written by Nur Yılmaz, in 2017 at Hacettepe University Institute of Fine Arts, under Painting Department. The thesis starts with the definition of the object and continues with further elaboration on art object. This is what the first chapter consists of. And Nur Yılmaz refers to artists from modern and contemporary area. Unlike two previous theses, Nur Yılmaz does not refer to other artists in the second chapter. In the second chapter she writes about her art works, explains the works one by one. In the last chapter, as a conclusion, she writes about her learning outcomes especially in practical artistic area. Considering this feature, Nur Yılmaz’ thesis has a similar structure to Gülen Eren Duran’s thesis. (Yılmaz, 2017).
The fourth thesis was chosen from Ataturk University, Painting Department. Writer of the thesis is Züleyha Zor, starts with elaborating on the importance and aims of the topic like 3 previous theses. Yet unlike previous theses, Zor’s thesis also has a material and method part. The first chapter of the thesis is about the term miniature, conceptual explanations of it and its practical usage in the historical context. In the second chapter, Züleyha Zor explains second important term of the thesis which is perspective. In the third chapter she writes about the selected artist Nakkas Naksi, his life and examines his works according to data given in the first and second chapter of the thesis. In the conclusion part she makes a general overview. Her thesis is similar to Ozan Uygan’s thesis in the sense that none of the writers refer to their own art works. (Zor, 2016)

The last thesis is Pınar Akarsu’s thesis written in 2010 at Marmara University Painting Science Major. In her thesis Pınar Akarsu’s subject is the relation between Surrealism and Dream. In the first chapter she makes a very detailed research. Unlike 4 previous theses, her thesis refers to many disciplines including philosophy, sociology, cinema, theater, architecture, and psychology. In previous examples, the theoretical background provided in the
theses usually relies on art (especially visual arts), and art history. In the first and second chapter she investigates one of her main themes “surrealism” and in the second chapter she investigates second main theme “dream”. In the third chapter, Pınar Akarsu examines the relationship between Surrealism and dream by adding examples from Surrealist art. In the conclusion part, she writes about why dream and surrealism are related and important subject considering modern individual's condition and how art functions in this context. In this thesis, again we do not see a part showing her art works like Ozan Uygan and Zuleyha Zor and unlike Nur Yılmaz and Gülten Eren Duran. She also includes a glossary of terms section in he thesis, which is unique among the five theses. (Akarsu, 2010).

As a result of the examination of five theses, a chart was designed by considering their common and distinctive points. The outcome of the research shows that each university, faculty and department in the fine arts area has its own style.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Thesis Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Pages</th>
<th>Conceptual, terminological part/Historical background</th>
<th>Art historical examples / Examples from current artists</th>
<th>Writer’s Art Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gülen Eren Duran</td>
<td>Wild Woman Archetype and Sculpture</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>Pages 4-34</td>
<td>Pages 39-73</td>
<td>Pages 77-85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ozan Uygan</td>
<td>The Use of 3D Printing Technologies in the Art of Sculpture</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3-18 / 19-36</td>
<td>17-52</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nur Yılmaz</td>
<td>Daily life objects</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>3-18</td>
<td>19-32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Züleyha Zor</td>
<td>The Nakkash Nakkashi’s Common Perspective Miniature References</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3-7 / 18-28</td>
<td>29-56</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pınar Akarsu</td>
<td>Surrealism and Dream</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>1-102 / 103-149</td>
<td>150-192</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difficulties in Thesis Process Resulting from Student Tendencies

Students' tendencies are also important in thesis writing process, students’ nature might be a reflection of art’s nature. To start with an area of fine arts might be reasonable. Fine arts area is a very distinctive from other scientific areas. Knowledge of the art area is not a cumulative and chronological one. And every artist/writer should put her/his special topic to the forefront. The area of art is mainly intuitive, visual and imaginary. To explain it with words creates a weakness in expression. At this point the most important problem reveals itself: to define a research question or thesis problem is really difficult. From this point we can jump to student tendencies. Due to the features of fine arts students usually cannot define their thesis problem. And also since fine arts faculties provide more practice focused education, students cannot capture the keen relationship between theoretical and practical field.

Fine arts students’ reading rate is not high and their educational background is not sufficient for conducting research. These factors also contribute to the problem. In these conditions, it is hard to have development in research area in two years graduate program.

The era we live in and its facilities creates problems on student profile as well. Since digital age is a visual age, students prefer to use digital facilities instead of printed materials such as art catalogs and books. Knowledge coming through internet makes the students’ knowledge superficial.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to reach a conclusion, all the parties involved in shaping the writing of the theses, that of students, institutions and advisors should be considered. It should be taken account that there is no custom solutions, thesis style may vary from student to student. Each student’s process might need some unique decisions.

Institutions should put their aim clearly whether the aim of the faculty is to train artists or artists/academicians.

Art students in the fine art faculties graduate level are the future academics potentially. Thus they should be aware of recent art, art history, and art theory. Thus to have a theoretical part with a conceptual and art historical...
background in their theses would be necessary. On the other hand, art produce a special kind of knowledge. This knowledge reveals itself through art work. This special knowledge should be revealed and dispersed. Thus, a thesis advisor should be careful about not destroying personal knowledge and tendencies of the art student. As a result, a thesis should be designed in a very well balanced way including both theory and knowledge in general sense and personnel artistic knowledge.

REFERENCES

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